

It is noted, however, that the Pollack publication does not constitute a reference under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) since it was published after the U.S. filing date of the present application. Furthermore, the earliest possible effective reference date of the Pollack publication is the filing date of the provisional application 60/220886, which was filed on July 26, 2000. It is noted further that the present U.S. application claims convention priority to Japanese Application 2000-223058, filed July 24, 2000, which is prior to the earliest possible effective reference date of the Pollack publication.

Accordingly, in order to overcome the rejection presented in the December 29, 2006 Office Action, a verified English translation of the Japanese Priority Application 2000-223058, filed July 24, 2000 is submitted herewith. It is noted that a certified copy of the Japanese priority application was filed at the U.S. PTO on July 24, 2001. In this regard, a copy of a PTO date-stamped postal receipt card showing that the PTO in fact received the certified copy of the priority application, is submitted herewith. Additionally, a copy of the Claim of Priority filed July 24, 2001 and the first two pages of the certified copy of the Japanese priority application, are submitted herewith. It is noted that the Examiner acknowledged the Claim of Foreign Priority, in item 12 of each of the June 10, 2006 Office Action and the December 29, 2006 Office Action. However, the Examiner has not formally acknowledged receipt of the certified copy of the Japanese priority application. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to provide such acknowledgement of the receipt of the certified copy of the Japanese priority application.

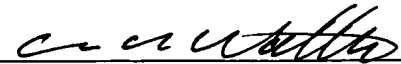
Thus, with the submission herewith of the verified English translation of the Japanese Priority Application 2000-223058, filed July 24, 2000, it is submitted that the Pollack publication (U.S. 2002/0019851) no longer constitutes a proper reference against the present claims. As such, it is submitted that the rejection presented in the December 29, 2006 Office Action has been overcome and, accordingly, that all of the present claims are clearly allowable.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is clearly in condition for allowance. An early notice thereof is earnestly solicited.

If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Susumu KOBAYASHI et al.

By:   
Charles R. Watts  
Registration No. 33,142  
Attorney for Applicants

CRW/asd  
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021  
Telephone (202) 721-8200  
Facsimile (202) 721-8250  
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